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BUREAU of MANA INVESTIGATION

ISSUE 7 ISSUE

JUDGE • ANGEL • BECKER

VOLUME 1 VOLUME

@smu



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"Please be careful with the pancakes!"

YOKO! AMARK! I'VE GOT THEM!



Bureau of Mana Investigation

Chapter 7

SMUDGE - BARON ENGEL - RICHARD BECKER

BACK COVER - SHANNON STUART
GUEST ILLO - MEGAN GILES

GREAT, GET IN.

MSPD

76-2

JUST FOR THE RECORD, AMARK, I *REALLY* DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF HAVING A CIVILIAN WITH US!

SLAM!

TRUST ME. I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN, YOKO.

WITHOUT HER, WE'D NEVER GET CLOSE TO THE BAND. THE CONCERT IS GOING TO BE PACKED WITH "FRIENDLY" DEMONS. IF WE JUST SHOW UP, THERE'S LIABLE TO BE A PANIC RIOT. HOLLY'S ONE OF THE ONLY NIVARRIANS THEY'D TRUST ENOUGH TO GIVE US THE TIME WE NEED TO FIND LORD SHEILBA AND HIS SNIPERS.

DALEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT.

YES, HELLO? I NEED TO SPEAK TO THE WATCH CAPTAIN. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

WHO'S CALLING?

LT. AMARK BUTTERCUP, MEGA-SHAMMARK BUREAU OF MANA INVESTIGATION.

M.S.P.D.

ONE MOMENT.

HOLLY, I WANT YOU TO PROMISE ME SOMETHING.

YES?

IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, AND I MEAN ANYTHING, I WANT YOU TO DROP AND FIND COVER TILL I OR AMARK GIVE THE ALLCLEAR.

YOKO, I GIVE YOU MY WORD, AND I'LL FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS LIKE A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER.

FINE.


<I DESPISE THIS LAND. THE SOONER WE'RE DONE HERE, THE BETTER.>
<AH, THERE'S OUR SEATS.>
<I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN DEAL WITH THIS INFERNAL PLACE.>
<I DON'T. I WISH TO GET SOMETHING TO MUNCH ON.>
<BE MY GUEST.>


<OUR COLLEAGUES SHOULD BE IN PLACE BY NOW.>
<ALL WE NEED TO DO IS SIT BACK AND WATCH THE SHOW.>

HMM, DALEPORT DEPARTMENT'S HERE.

'BOUT TIME.

DEAR, LOOK!

'EVENING OFFICERS.

'EVENING.

YOU MUST BE CAPTAIN RAILY.

IS EVERYONE SET AND READY TO MOVE?

WE'VE GOT THE ENTIRE AREA SURROUNDED BY UNIFORMED OFFICERS WHO ARE OUT OF SIGHT AND PLAINCLOTHES MEN MINGLING AMONGST THE CROWD.

TWO POLICE SHARP-SHOOTER TEAMS ARE ON THE OPPOSING ROOFS IN CASE THIS 'SHEILBA'S' HENCHMEN TRY SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE HALL.

I'VE ALSO GOT CROWD CONTROL ON STANDBY.

AS STANDARD POLICY, I'D ALREADY GOT FOUR OF MY WERE-BOYS INSIDE THE HALL SNIFFING FOR DRUGS.

THEY'VE BEEN INFORMED OF THE SITUATION AND ARE READY TO GIVE ASSISTANCE.

BEAUTIFUL.

WHERE'S COGS AND ERMIN?

THEY'RE HELPING SET UP THE ANTI-GATE WARDS.

SEEMS DALEPORT HAS A WARD GENERATOR.

A GENERATOR, EH? WHERE'D YOU GET THAT?

WHILE WE GET A LOT OF WERES JOINING THE DEPARTMENT, WE GET VERY FEW MAGES. SO WE MAKE DO. NOT AS RELIABLE AS A HAND CAST WARD, THOUGH. COST US A PRETTY COPPER, TOO.

ALL RIGHT, YOKO, I WANT YOU TO MEET UP WITH THE WERES INSIDE AND FIND THE TWO SNIPERS. CAPTAIN, CAN YOU HAVE AN ARMORED VAN MEET US AT THE REAR?

SURE CAN.

GREAT! HOLLY AND I WILL GO AND TRY TO TALK TO THE BAND. WITH LUCK, WE'LL GET THEM OUT THE BACK, FIND THE SNIPERS, AND ROUND UP SHEILBA AT THE SAME TIME.

DON'T FORGET YOUR GLASSES AND RADIO.

GOOD THINKING, YOKO.

GLASSES?

I WEAR MY SUNGLASSES AT NIGHT. . . .

YEAH, RUNES IN THE RIMS CANCEL A LOT OF THE 'DON'T NOTICE ME' INVISIBILITY SPELLS.

WELL, I'LL BE . . . CAN WE GET SOME OF THESE?

I'M SURE WE CAN ARRANGE SOMETHING IN EXCHANGE WITH THAT GENERATOR OF YOURS.

NEWS FLASH, PEOPLE! THE WARMUP ACT SHOULD BE STARTING!

IF WE MOVE, WE NEED TO DO IT NOW!

WHAT'DAYA MEAN THE CARD'S NOT APPROVED!?

PCORN!

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE MAXED YOUR CREDIT LINE.

I'M SORRY, MS... UM... ANDERS?

LIKE *HELL* I HAVE.

RUN THE CARD AGAIN.

EH?

<I LEFT HER IN THE DEMON LANDS WITH...>

<WHAT IS *SHE* DOING HERE?>

MAYBE YOU HAVE SOME CASH ON YOU?

<Bring sight to the sightless ...>

You see nothing

...
UNICORN
....

Look elsewhere,

HUH? WHERE?

NEVER MIND! KEEP THE DAMN FOOD!

EXIT

<SHEILBA CAN HANDLE HIM ON HIS OWN!>

There is nothing here to view . . .

THIS WAY, AMARK!

MS. ANDERS, STOP!

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY!

HERE! NOW PLEASE LET US PASS. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

BACK STAGE PASS

Nosferatu Lovecraft

THE BAND'S 'BOUT READY TO GO ON, MS. ANDERS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "US"?

SHE MEANS ME.

LT. AMARK BUTTERCUP, MEGA-SHAMMARK BMI.

UNICORN ....

PLEASE! WE HAVE TO SEE SHARRDAN RIGHT AWAY.

=SIGH= THIS IS GOING TO BE MY LOT IN LIFE FOR THE NEXT DECADE, ISN'T IT?

FOLLOW ME.

THANK YOU.

SO, WE GOING ON STAGE ANYTIME IN THE COMING YEAR?

THAT'S UP TO BECKY NOW, ISN'T IT?

I'M SORRY GUYS...

WE'VE DONE THE CONCERT THING BEFORE. WHY COLD FEET NOW?

WE CAN ALWAYS JUST THROW YOU ON STAGE.

HEY!

HE WAS JOKING, BECKY.

I KNOW, IT'S JUST THAT...

HEY! HOLLY MADE IT!

SHARRDAN!

OH, THANK GOD!

YOU'VE GOT TO CALL OFF THE CONCERT NOW!

NOT YOU TOO, HOLLY.

I JUST KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

WHAT'S GOING ON, HOLLY?

I HATE TO BE THE BRINGER OF BLACK TIDINGS, BUT YOUR DAD'S HERE. HE'S GOT SNIPERS ALREADY HIDDEN IN THE HALL. YOU WALK OUT ON STAGE NOW AND YOUR A DEAD MAN.

AMARK?!

WHERE'D HE COME FROM?

PLEASE, SHARRDAN, SHEILBA MEANS TO KILL YOU.

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU, UNICORN!?

YOU DON'T. YOU BELIEVE HOLLY.

....

SHARRDAN. WE SHOULD LISTEN TO HIM.

BECKY, CALL JOHN.

TELL HIM TO ISSUE RAIN CHECKS.

HOLLY, TAKE THEM TO THE VAN.

IT'LL TAKE YOU ALL TO A SAFE HOUSE.

RIGHT, AMARK.

SHARRDAN, MAKE SURE THAT HOLLY GETS IN THE VAN WITH YOU.

I STILL HAVE WORK TO DO HERE.

CLANK

I UNDER-STAND.

I THINK YOU CAN CATCH HIM?

IF THE GODS ARE WILLING . . .

TAP TAP

POINT POINT

YES, SERGEANT?

THIS SMELLS BAD. SNIPER'S ON THE NEXT WALK OVER. CONCENTRATING, BUT NERVOUS AND TWITCHY. WE TRY SOMETHING NOW AND THAT RIFLE'S GOING TO GO OFF.

WE BIDE OUR TIME, THEN, AND HOPE THE OTHERS HAVE BETTER LUCK.

SHARP-SHOOTER MIGHT BE USEFUL.

THERE'S A GOOD CATWALK CATYWOMPAS TO HIM WITH TWO SPOTS.

SET UP THERE AND HE'LL NEVER SEE YOU.

GOOD IDEA. I'LL COVER THE SPOT UNTIL THE SHARP-SHOORTER SHOW. HAVE WE HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE OTHER SNIPER?

THE TV/VIDEO BOX HASN'T RESPONDED TO RADIO CHECK-IN. WE'VE SENT ANOTHER TEAM TO INVESTIGATE.

UNDERSTOOD.

GOOD HUNTING, SERGEANT SAKI.

IN THE VAN, QUICKLY.

YES, OFFICER.

HOLLY?

AMARK . . .

HOLLY! COME ON! IF YOU DON'T GET IN THE VAN, AMARK'S GONNA HAVE *ME* FOR LUNCH!

FINE. I'M COMING.

CLANK

VAN SECURED, AND ON ITS WAY, SIR, OVER.

BE SAFE AMARK . . .

POLICE

Tv/Video

EMPLOYERS ONLY

SNIFF

NOD

TEAM THREE AT TV/VID. THERE'S BLOOD IN THE HALL, DOOR IS CLOSED!

EMPLOYEES ONLY

ASSESSMENT?!

THE 2ND SNIPER HAS NEUTRALIZED THE GUARD AND IS INSIDE!

STAND BY TEAM THREE!

ROGER.

THANK YOU.

THANK YOU.

I KNOW YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING PATIENTLY FOR TONIGHT'S MAIN ACT, NOSFERATU HOVERCRAFT.

HOWEVER, DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, TONIGHT'S CONCERT HAS BEEN CANCELED.

BOO

HISS

BOO

ARRG!

PLEASE HOLD ON TO YOUR TICK--

TA-KRACK!

SHIT!

Seek!

FREEZE, DALEPORT POLICE!

THUNK!

CLACK

FUMP


〈THOSE IDIOTS!〉


〈I'D BEST FIND SHARRDAN NOW.〉


〈I'LL NEVER HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE.〉


〈HE'S GOT TO BE HERE SOMEWHERE.〉

NO . . . THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN . . .

=WHINE=

CAPTAIN RAILY!

WE'VE GOT A MASS STAMPEDE!

WE NEED AN EVACUATION, *NOW!*

SHARRDAN!?

BAM

〈YOU ARE DEAD!〉

〈DO YOU HEAR ME, BOY!?〉

STOP!

〈HOLD IT RIGHT THERE.〉

〈SECURITY!〉

〈LET'S SEE WHO YOU REALLY ARE . . .〉

<Magic Break!>

TA-CHRACK!

〈LORD SHEILBA?!〉

AH, SHIT . . .

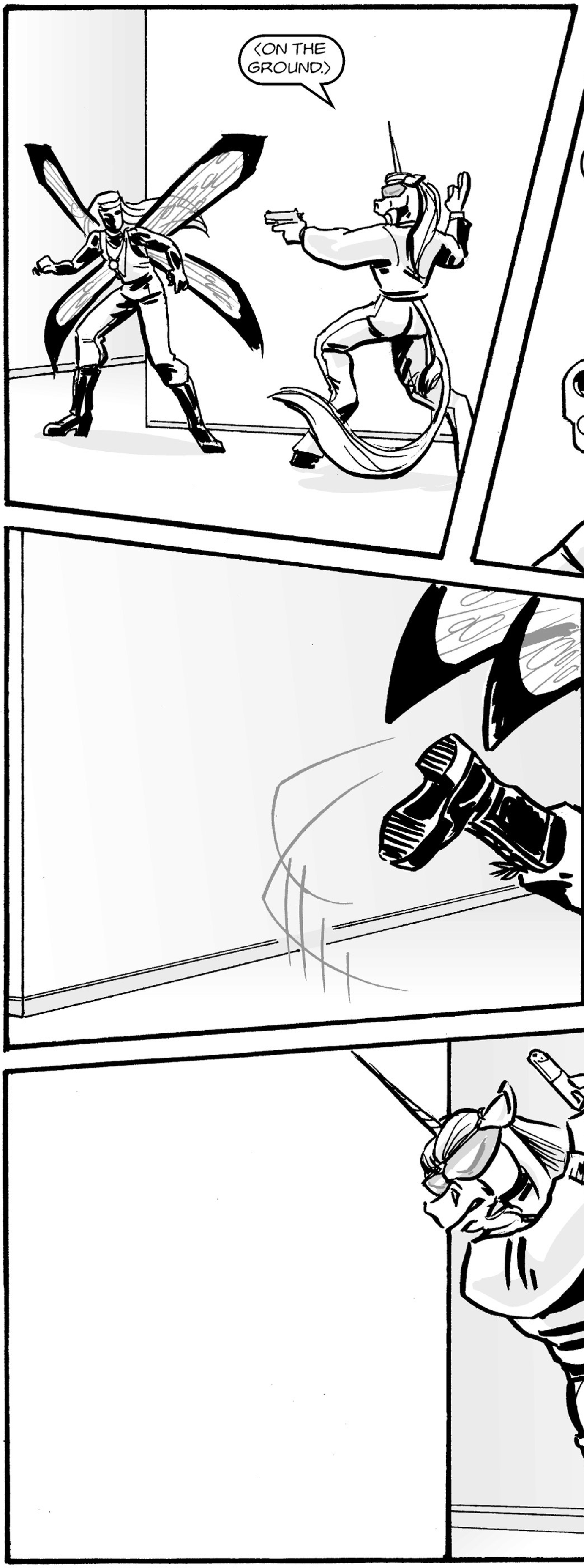
FZZ-ZT!




〈WHEN I FIND YOU, SHARRDAN, I'M GOING TO BOIL YOUR LUNGS OUT YOUR NOSE.〉


〈I'M NOT GIVING YOU THAT CHANCE!〉


〈YOU'RE DEAD!〉


〈ON THE GROUND.〉


〈NOW, SHEILBA!〉

SHIT!

ENCOUNTERED PRIME SUSPECT BACKSTAGE! TWO SECURITY DOWN! REQUESTING MEDICAL! REQUESTING BACK-UP!

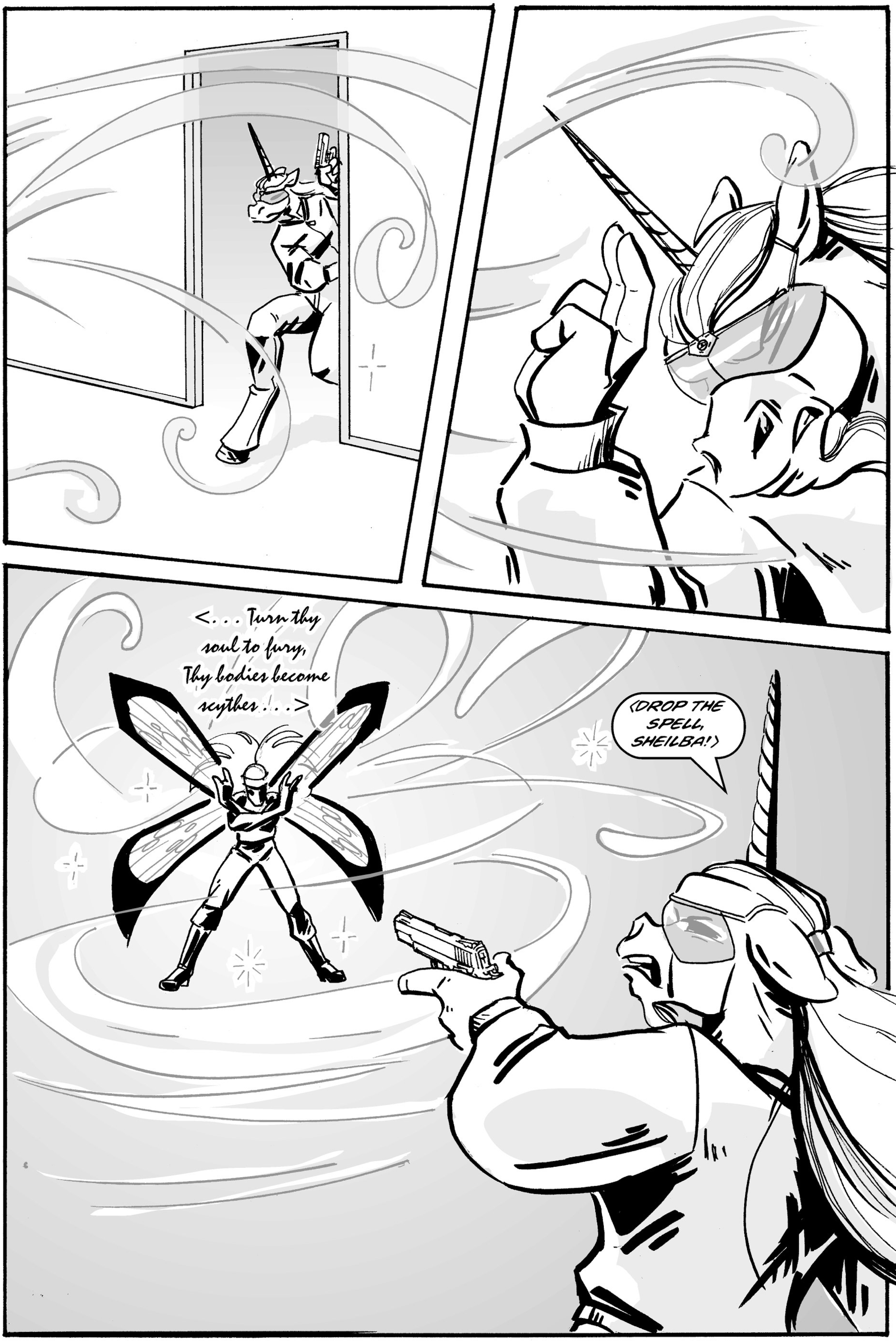
TO STAGE

<LOOK!>

<IT'S LORD SHEILBA!>

<RUN FOR IT!>

<WE'RE ALL DEAD!>


<...Turn thy soul to fury, Thy bodies become scythes...>
<DROP THE SPELL, SHEILBA!>

<Let those who anger you feel thy harpy's talons!>

Wind break!


CRACK!




〈DIE, UNICORN!〉
〈REQUEST DENIED.〉
TO BE CONCLUDED

THE CITY OF DALEPORT

By Smudge and Dave Bryant

When the Dolmanic diaspora fled the destruction of the Were Empire, it spread across the rolling plains that would become the Northern Dolmanic Republic. The migration ended at the ocean in a river-delta valley between the ends of two mountain ranges. Thick forests, rich fisheries, and fertile bottom land made it a nearly ideal place to live.

To exploit such wealth required a settled way of life. The cultural drift that might have separated the Dale folk from their nomadic brethren was countered by the need for a strong mutual defense against the Hooven tribes in the mountains. These ties persisted through the conquest of those tribes and the crowning of the Northern Dolmanic Kingdom's first monarch.

The Dale became one of the new realm's first civilized provinces. Its economy continued to revolve around lumbering, fishing, and agriculture, but a new factor emerged: commerce. The growth of trade, especially with the Shammark Basin, made the Dale uniquely important.

One of the fief's more notable lords founded the city of Daleport. At first it was little larger than the village and castle across the river, but as the river port expanded, it was joined by shipbuilding slips. The increasingly cosmopolitan population swelled, outgrowing the city walls; trails became roads and new trails appeared.

Even so, the broad river remained unbridged. Keeping it open for shipping was too important, construction technology was too primitive to throw a span across such an expanse, and the fading of magic at the end of the Age of Legend made it too unreliable for building. Instead, ferries tied the shores together -- but Daleport's newfound importance demanded more.

When, during this time, the family that held the Dale died out, the region became a crown province. The king, forced to find a solution for this small but important area, named a distant relative of the family, a talented and proven soldier and administrator, as successor.

The project for which he is best remembered was the first bridge over the river. Developments in building techniques finally allowed large enough arches and sturdy enough pilings, and mechanical technology had mastered the drawbridge. As a result, the importance of the roads skyrocketed, drawing yet more traffic -- and immigrants.

Like Shammark County, Daleport became a patchwork of neighborhoods, including not only humans and Hooven but lycanthropes and more exotic peoples from distant lands. The growing city absorbed the old seat on the other bank, the economy shifted to shipbuilding and trade, and the Dale became a pocket of prosperity.

As transportation improved, so did the roads. The first bridge lasted for centuries and was joined by several others, but around the time of the Great Awakening it had to be dismantled to make way for the ever-larger sailing ships calling at the port or plying the river. The delta was dredged regularly to maintain shipping channels deep enough for these ships' deeper drafts.

The industrial era realigned Daleport's priorities. Steamships grew too large to travel upriver and railroads snaked across the land. The river port shifted cargoes among river barges, ocean steamers, and freight trains. One rail line clung to the base of the mountains, meandering along the coast to the Shammark Basin. Trucks and aircraft appeared, and heavy industry diversified.

The asteroid impact of fifty years ago inflicted less damage on the Dale than on the Shammark Basin; the city, far enough upriver to avoid the worst of the tsunami's energy, suffered a grevious flood but not wholesale flattening. Still, the Coast Line was demolished, cutting the major land access to Shammark County, and both ports were damaged.

Not suffering the Shammark Basin's isolation, Daleport quickly regained its status as an industrial city and hub linking Mega-Shammark's seaport to the rest of the NDR. Today, ancient history and modern cosmopolitanism make it a thriving city, bridging the past and the future much as that first drawbridge united the banks of the river flowing through its heart.




S. Stuart 6-2002